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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

POLICY PLANNING STAFF

Memo for discussion with Mr. Ferguson (S/P) only. GW

(R)

May 5, 1952

Subject: Possible Alternate Approach to the Problem of Establishing a Middle East Command

1. I have been speculating during the last week whether the current informal exchange of views between NEA and British Embassy officials re MEC might not afford a desirable opportunity for us to discuss, among ourselves and with the British, a possible alternate approach to the problem, along the lines ~~outlined~~ suggested below.

2. Three considerations primarily prompt this suggestion:

a) The suggestion made by Mr. Burrows of the British Embassy (see NEA memo 4/29/52) that "Further progress in developing a common view of MEC0 might be made through ordinary diplomatic discussions."

b) My knowledge of Turkish thinking on the subject, notably that prior diplomatic preparation (supplementing our quadripartite demarches of last November) is desirable before any concrete proposals are made to the Arab Governments; and

c) An impression gathered during my six weeks in the Department that we ourselves are not clear in our own minds as to just how we would like to proceed in the matter.

3. My suggestion is based on the premises that at least for the foreseeable future (of cold war) no actual Allied ME Command is necessary and that to endeavor at this stage to set up such a Command would hinder rather than facilitate agreement for the setting up of a MEDO (Middle East Defense Organization) ~~to include the Arab~~ States.

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4. If this premise be accepted, the four "sponsoring powers" and three additional "founding powers" might consider, through diplomatic channels rather than at a formal conference, agreeing among themselves:

a) That establishment of an MEDO is a sound first step towards realizing the objectives of area defense envisaged when MEC was conceived.

b) That the functions of MEDO should be limited to (i) facilitating continuing exchange of views between "participating governments" and (ii) "planning", both for common area defense and for related military aid programs (supply of equipment and training missions).

c) That, if Anglo-Egyptian settlement is achieved, Egypt be again invited to become the eighth, "founding power" and that its acceptance of such invitation be simultaneous with such settlement.

d) That primary responsibility for performance of the functions of MEDO--see (b) above--be placed in a Steering Group composed of representatives of the four "sponsoring powers". (Note: If such Anglo-Egyptian settlement is achieved, an Egyptian member might be added to the Steering Group to the end that an Arab representative be associated ab initio in its proceedings and thus better prepare the ground for "area-wide cooperation on a basis of equality.")

e) That such responsibility be exercised by the Steering Group primarily through a dependent MEDO Headquarters which it would set up on the Island of Cyprus and which would be so organized that in the event of hostilities (or at such earlier date as the participating governments might decide) it would be immediately converted into a ME Command in the full sense of the term.

5. Finally, the seven (or eight) "founding powers" might decide among themselves, after agreeing to the foregoing:

a) That the next demarche to the other Arab States should be made, as was the case last November, jointly by the diplomatic representatives (at each capital) of the countries represented on the Steering Group;

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b) That

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b) That subsequent demarches to such states (notably exploratory conversations of a military nature) be made by representatives of the Steering Group itself working closely with the said diplomatic representatives at each capital; and

c) That, eventually, after establishment of MEDO Headquarters, such conversations be continued by representatives of such Headquarters working under directives of the Steering Group and in close consultation with the same diplomatic representatives.

6. A Military Representatives' Committee, with members appointed by all states participating in MEDO would sit continuously in Cyprus as liaison between MEDO Headquarters and the Chiefs of Staff of such states.

7. I sense that, were the interested powers to adopt a course of action along the foregoing lines, they would, too, create a structure able to meet Mr. Jessup's point as to the need for "some strong outside influence to be exerted in a continuing overall manner" (see his memo to Mr. Matthews, 4/28/52).

George Wadsworth

Attachments:

1. NEA memo, 4/29/52.
2. Mr. Jessup's memo, 4/28/52.
3. Basic MEC paper received 4/18/52.

S/P:GWadsworth:mw

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